

Walk the talk: Help your heart health one step at a time



People tend to go big for their New Year's fitness resolutions. Do a triathlon! Get in great shape! Lose 70 pounds by Valentine's Day! But big can backfire when it comes to setting goals and following through. A specific, manageable fitness plan will get you much further than vague hopes for (drumroll, please) Total Transformation.

One of our favorite forms of exercise doesn't require a gym membership, an instructor or expensive equipment — just a good pair of shoes. We're talking about walking, of course.

Simply start by putting one foot in front of the other, and then keep going...for about a half-hour at a moderate pace, or even just 10 minutes if you're a beginner. Walking, that most basic of activities for our bipedal species, is one of the simplest ways to exercise. But simple doesn't mean ineffective. According to new research, walking can improve your heart health in a snap (translation: just 10 weeks). In the study, women who walked briskly for 150 minutes a week for 10 weeks improved heart disease risk factors, including blood pressure, cholesterol, body mass index (BMI) and cardiovascular fitness.

Team up with a friend or neighbor and plot out a walking schedule, working your way up to 30 minutes a day, most days of the week, at a good clip. Pretty soon, "going the extra mile" — or two — for your health will be a walk in the park!